

Gutsy Coolen reaches UK summit after heart scare

Tom Coolen told Fife Flyers fans how he took nine hours recently to climb and descend the 4,413 feet of Ben Nevis, two years after suffering a heart attack.

And the Elite League ice hockey club's head coach revealed that he once went on a walk in sub-zero temperatures and in a snow storm, not knowing that a polar bear was roaming the streets of his town looking for food.

He said: "If that bear had got a whiff of me I would be in the Kingdom of Heaven, not the Kingdom of Fife."

The coach told the stories during the first Hockey Show of the season at the Adam Smith Theatre in Kirkcaldy.

The Beveridge Suite was packed as Coolen and the rest of the team told stories about their careers to date in hockey around the world.

Ali McLaren and Allan Crow, editor of The Fife Free Press, co-hosted the event and now the concentration is to snap a five-game losing streak when the club entertains Dundee Stars in the Challenge Cup on Saturday (face-off 19.15).

Then, they make the long trip to Surrey to face Guildford Flames in the Elite League.

The 5-1 capitulation at Cardiff Devils last Saturday followed by Sunday's 8-5 defeat has frustrated Coolen and, in

particular, losing at home where Fife were 4-2 behind after the first period, drew the second 1-1, but lost the third 3-2.

Mistakes were evident throughout and Coolen got back on the ice with his players at The Fife Ice Arena yesterday (Wed) after their gym session on Tuesday.

The 70-year-old coach from Halifax, Nova Scotia, said: "It (Sunday) was not good enough, I know that."

The former Team Canada assistant coach, who has also coached at top level in North America and Europa, including Latvia and Poland, added: "Looking forward, I am not happy with where we are at and things have to change.

"We have to play from player one to 18 and to give up eight goals at home is not going to get anybody anywhere. The challenge is to work towards things that will help us get better."

And fans favourite, Lucas Chiodo, who is in his second season with the Kirkcaldy club and who spent the summer fishing for lobsters in North America, told fans that the team Coolen has assembled has "a lot of potential".

Now, it is up to the players to show that potential.